

If we accept that the power acquired by the tech monopolies is the same as the influence the railway and land monopolies over government, we can see that the war on climate change is only the most recent front in a war to regain civic control of democracy from monopolistic corporations. On this principle Smith, George, Keynes and Stiglitz concur, and we should acknowledge that the attempts to tax these businesses in order to provide, among other public goods a Green New Deal, is the right thing to do.

In broad terms of public policy according to Georgist political economy, this means for example, that the patents, research and development rights and the fruits of these researches ought therefore to be used for the public good, not exploited by corporate monopolies for profit at our peril. Existing and new technologies should come into public ownership, so that they can benefit the public rather than shareholders. Rent-seeking interests in businesses ought to be strictly controlled, in the public and ecological interest. Legislation should enable citizens to access community wealth in kind and in cash, such as through local banks, acting as publicly owned subsidiaries of a publicly owned national bank, to acquire the capital needed to reshape, design and build sustainable communities. The individuals and companies who are involved in creating beneficial new technologies should be rewarded financially by the taxpayer and celebrated publicly in accordance with the benefit they provide to the common good. These measures would be required even if a single land value tax was implemented. Indeed, such measures would open the way to seeing the advantages of implementing a land value tax by removing objections from vested interests.

Although George identified key man-made monopolies such as public schools and universities, libraries, railways, telecommunications and municipal utilities as early as 1871, he was less confident of others, such as the money monopoly. In his biography of George, Charles Barker suggests that George must have realised that a land tax alone cannot deal with non-terrestrial monopolies such as banking, because when money is created for many purposes besides acquiring land, the value created is not always reflected in land values. This meant there were huge areas of the economy which his solution had not remedied. Circumstances and his failing health, however, prevented George from freely investigating these problems. It means, with few exceptions, that the issue of monopolies other than land remain as unresolved for Georgists as they were for George in 1884 when he wrote,

What should properly belong to the township or ward, what to the country or state, what to the nation, and what to the federation of nations as it is in the manifest line of civilisation to evolve, is a matter into which I have not entered. As to the proper organisation of government, and the distribution of powers, there is much need for thought. (Social Problems, Chapter XVII)

This matter, dramatically revealed in the context of the ecological crisis, is I believe now the urgent concern proper to Georgist political economy. Georgists need to develop George's thought where he left it open for further enquiry, especially in relation to the responsibilities of government.

Meanwhile, we can confidently assert that 'the revenue arising from the common property' should be 'applied to the common benefit' in a Green New Deal. The connection is justified because a prudential concern for the ecological is part of our personal responsibility to the increasing intensity of our interconnectedness with both nature and civilisation. ■

BOOKS WORTH READING

- by Joseph Milne

There are a number of books worth reading that fill in the historical background of Henry George and the rise of economic thought. Some of these were known to George. For example, Patrick Edward Dove (1815-1873) wrote a remarkable book entitled *Theory of Human Progress and Natural Probability of a Reign of Justice* in 1851. He was a land reformer who, like George, had proposed a land value tax. George praises him in *The Science of Political Economy*, yet feels he does not really grasp the principles of political economy. Nevertheless, he regards Dove's contribution to the idea of progress greatly superior to that of Herbert Spencer. One aspect of Dove's book which makes it worth reading is his great knowledge of the history of philosophy going back to Aristotle's understanding of society. His book was greatly admired by the British historian Thomas Carlyle and the American statesman Charles Sumner, a leader in the abolition of slavery campaign.

Another important contemporary to George was Robert Owen (1757-1858). His *A New View of Society: Or, Essays on the Formation of Human Character, and the Application of the Principle to Practice* in 1813, lays the foundation of the English cooperative movement, still present in the Cooperative shops and the ethical Cooperative Bank. A new edition of this book is available *A New View of Society and Other Writings*, edited by G. Claeys, published by Penguin Books, 1991. There is also *The Selected Works of Robert Owen*, edited in four volumes by G. Claeys, published in London by Pickering and Chatto, 1993. Robert Owen is famous for setting up communities of workers with good homes and an education in the UK and the USA. His work reminds us that the nineteenth century was a time of great aspiration for social justice, for improved conditions for workers, and free education for children. Although the communities he set up have now all vanished, his general influence is still felt along with the great influence of Charles Dickens.

There were also important religious reformers who supported George. One important figure in America was the Christian social reformer Walter Rauschenbusch. Harry Emerson Fosdick has written an excellent biography of him entitled *Walter Rauschenbusch*, published by Macmillan in 1942. Like many reformers of the nineteenth century, he was enamoured by the idea of progress. But unlike George, he was drawn to the Darwinian theory of evolution. He even goes so far as to suggest evolution supersedes the teachings of Christ. His major work is *Theology for a Social Gospel*. In this work he grapples with what he sees as a disconnection between the life of religious faith and the social reform of society. That disconnection was an unintended consequence of the Enlightenment, where 'society' was reduced to mere material progress devoid of social or religious conscience. He argues that improvements in roads, telephones, voting machines and cheaper car fares, though good in themselves, yet mean nothing without social reform.

But many social reformers erroneously identified these material advances with social progress, and so 'Religious men are forced into a tragic dilemma when they face organized socialism. On the one hand they realize in its idea the most thorough and consistent economic elaboration of the Christian ideal. It is far and away the most powerful force for justice, democracy, and organised fraternity in the modern world. On the other hand, these moral elements are fused with an alloy that is repellent to

HGF BRIEFING NOTES

their Christian instincts...I speak for men who have drawn their economic insight from socialism, and their democracy and moral order from Jesus himself, and who yet find it hard to cooperate wholeheartedly with party socialism as they actually find it.' The reason for this is that party socialism was strongly associated with 'atheism, free love, and red-handed violence'.

Yet Rauschenbusch believed he could reconcile Darwinian evolutionary theory with a Christian conception of social progress. It is therefore worth having some knowledge of the influence of Darwin, along with Herbert Spencer, at that time in America. For this there is an excellent study by Richard Hofstadter entitled *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, published by Beacon Press, 1955. It gives a bizarre history of extreme enthusiasms. Business men can abandon all conscience since the present industrial injustices are simply an inevitable stage in social evolution, which *eventually* will lead to a moral stage. Meanwhile ruthless competition must continue to embody the evolutionary struggle for existence, out of which the strongest will emerge. The weak and the poor will simply fall away.

Two significant opponents of this evolutionary conception of social progress were Edward Bellamy and Henry George. As Richard Hofstadter remarks, George 'like most other dissenters, however, he found himself compelled to grapple with the fatalism of evolutionary sociology. If the single tax on land values were to be accepted as the open-sesame to a new world of progress and plenty, George felt he must first refute both the Malthusian explanation of misery and the Spencerian argument against rapid progress'. For Spencer human nature must change through evolution for there to be any real social progress. Meanwhile society can only wait for biological evolution to bring about that change through survival of the fittest.

Spencerian Darwinism was the most prominent theory of social evolution, but it was not alone. There were other less radical and rather subtler views directly drawn from the empirical study of the natural world. Two alternative voices were Henry Huxley and Alfred Russel Wallace. Martin Fichman's *Evolutionary Theory and Victorian Culture*, published by Humanity Books, 2002, provides an authoritative study of these alternative voices, most especially of Alfred Russel Wallace. Henry George crossed swords with Henry Huxley in newspaper correspondence. But Alfred Russel Wallace was an entirely different sort of man, deeply conversant with the biological study of evolution and also with primitive societies. He was far more widely travelled than Darwin, and although he believed in natural selection (the phrase he first coined), he did not believe it extended into the social development of society. Man was free to decide his own social future. This meant that immediate change and improvement were possible, and from his reflections on what inhibited the social development of Victorian England he observed it was the private ownership of land, bringing about the insanitary conditions and deprivation of the city slums. He had founded 'The Land Nationalisation Society' in 1881 and later invited George to address the Society. [▶](#)



WE VALUE YOUR OPINION

Your *Land&Liberty* editors want to take this opportunity to wish all *Land&Liberty* readers a very Happy New Year. With a new war on the Continent as well as price inflation being felt by too many families here in Great Britain and elsewhere, 2022 has indeed been a tumultuous year for a lot of people. We would be amiss not to mention these unfortunate circumstances. We believe strongly and deeply in better times ahead.

As 2022 is coming to a close, we must also emphasise the extent to which we have enjoyed reading your constructive feedback, comments, and general input. We hope this inflow of valuable and helpful reader participation continues into the new year. If you want to let your voice be heard don't hesitate to write us directly. This is most easily done via e-mail.

E-mail us at: editor@landandliberty.net

We value your opinion.

We also value your contributions. In fact, very much so. When you feel we have not yet covered a certain story, or when you feel a particular perspective could add some important nuance to our beloved magazine, perhaps this could be your opportunity to write an article.

Again, e-mail us at: editor@landandliberty.net

FRIDAY MEETINGS

In 2022 all Friday Meetings have been held online (via Zoom video link). It is what we have now grown accustomed to. Still, Friday Meetings could move back to Mandeville Place in the future.

What we know for certain is that both the afternoon study group and the evening study group arrangement is planned to continue in this well-established two-way format.

The works being chosen for the upcoming Spring term have yet to be finally decided. As always we invite you to keep yourself updated on Friday Meetings activities - along with other activities related to The Henry George Foundation - by visiting our website.

Go to: <https://www.henrygeorgefoundation.org> [▶](#)